

16 Leading Humanitarian and Human Rights Organisations Call to Stop Arms Transfers to Israel, Palestinian Armed Groups

January 24, 2024

An Open Call to all UN Member States to stop fueling the crisis in Gaza and avert further humanitarian catastrophe and loss of civilian life

We, the undersigned organisations, call on all States to immediately **halt** the transfer of weapons, parts, and ammunition to Israel and Palestinian armed groups **while there is risk, they are used to commit or facilitate serious violations of international humanitarian or human rights law.**

Israel's bombardment and siege are depriving the civilian population of the basics to survive and rendering Gaza uninhabitable. Today, the civilian population in Gaza faces a humanitarian crisis of unprecedented severity and scale.

Furthermore, Palestinian armed group-led attacks [killed](#) around 1,200 people and took hundreds of Israeli and foreign hostages, including children, and continue to hold more than 130 hostages [captive](#) inside Gaza. Armed groups in Gaza have continued to indiscriminately [fire rockets](#) toward population centers in Israel, [disrupting school](#) for children, displacing and threatening the lives and well-being of civilians. Hostage-taking and indiscriminate attacks are [violations](#) of international humanitarian law and must end immediately.

Humanitarian agencies, human rights groups, United Nations officials, and more than 153 [member states](#) have called for an immediate ceasefire. However, Israel continues to use explosive weapons and munitions in densely populated areas with massive humanitarian consequences for the people of Gaza. World leaders have urged the Israeli government to reduce civilian casualties, yet Israeli military operations in Gaza continue to kill people at unprecedented levels, according to [recent remarks](#) by the UN Secretary-General. Member states have a legal responsibility to use all possible tools to leverage better protection of civilians and adherence to international humanitarian law. Gaza's remaining lifeline – an internationally-funded humanitarian aid response – has been paralyzed by the intensity of the hostilities, which have included the shooting of aid convoys, recurrent communications blackouts, damaged roads, restrictions on essential supplies, an almost complete ban on commercial supplies, and a bureaucratic process to send aid into Gaza.

Israel's military activity has destroyed a substantial portion of Gaza's homes, schools, hospitals, water infrastructure, shelters, and refugee camps; the indiscriminate nature of these bombings and, a pattern of apparently disproportionate civilian harm they routinely cause, is unacceptable. The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights has [warned](#) of the "heightened risk of atrocity crimes" being committed in Gaza and called on all states to prevent such crimes from unfolding. Since this call, the humanitarian crisis in Gaza has only deteriorated further:

- More than 25,000 Palestinians, at least 10,000 of them children, have been [killed](#) in less than four months, according to the Ministry of Health in Gaza. Thousands more are buried under the rubble and presumed dead.
- More than 62,000 people have been [injured](#), many with life-changing injuries that will leave them with permanent disabilities; these include more than 1,000 Palestinian [children](#) who have lost one or more of their upper or lower limbs.
- An unknown number of Palestinian civilians, reportedly including children, have been unlawfully detained, [according to the UN](#), and must be released.

- Palestinians continue to be killed nearly every day in areas the Israeli government told them to flee. In the first week of 2024, an Israeli airstrike [killed](#) 14 people - the majority children - near an area Israeli forces prescribed as a “humanitarian zone.”
- Over 85% of Gaza’s population, around 1.9 million people, has been forcibly [displaced](#). Many followed Israeli-issued orders to relocate south and are now being squeezed into tiny pockets of land that cannot sustain human life, which have become breeding ground for the spread of disease.
- More than half of a million Palestinians in Gaza face starvation and more than 90% of the population faces acute [food insecurity](#), the highest proportion ever [recorded](#) by a technical humanitarian body responsible for making evidence-based assessments of food insecurity.
- More than 70% of [Gaza’s homes](#), much of its schools, and its water and sanitation infrastructure have been destroyed or damaged and left the population with almost no access to clean water.
- Not a single medical facility in the enclave is [fully operational](#) and those partially functioning are overwhelmed with trauma cases and shortages of medical supplies and doctors. More than 300 [health workers](#) have been killed.
- At least 167* aid workers in Gaza have been killed, the highest of any conflict in this century.

Gaza today is the most dangerous place to be a child, a journalist, and an aid worker. Hospitals and schools should never become battlegrounds. These conditions have created a situation of utter desperation inside Gaza, leading top aid officials to declare that there are no longer the conditions for a meaningful humanitarian response in Gaza. This will not change until the siege, the bombardment, and the fighting ends. The United Nations recently [described](#) humanitarian access in January so far as a “significant deterioration.” Israeli forces have repeatedly denied permission for aid convoys to reach areas north of Wadi Gaza where people are at the highest risk of starvation.

In recent weeks, high ranking Israeli officials have begun calling for the deportation of Palestinian civilians out of Gaza. The forcible transfer within Gaza and deportation of a portion of the population across borders, lacking any guarantees of return, would constitute a serious violation of international law, amounting to an atrocity crime.

We demand an immediate ceasefire and call on all states to halt the transfer of weapons that can be used to commit violations of international humanitarian and human rights law. The UN Security Council must fulfill its responsibility to maintain global peace and security by adopting measures to halt the transfer of weapons to the Government of Israel and Palestinian armed groups and prevent the supply of arms that risk being used in the commission of international crimes, effective immediately.

All states have the obligation to prevent atrocity crimes and promote adherence to norms that protect civilians. The international community is long overdue to live up to these commitments.

Editor’s Note

- The total number of aid workers killed includes staff members of [UN](#) agencies, NGOs, as well as the [Palestinian Red Crescent Society](#). Figures on the annual number of aid workers killed in other context can be found on the [Aid Worker Security Database](#).

Undersigned

1. Federation Handicap International - Humanity & Inclusion
2. War Child Alliance
3. Christian Aid
4. Norwegian People's Aid
5. Médecins du Monde International Network
6. Mennonite Central Committee
7. medico international
8. Oxfam
9. Center for Civilians in Conflict (CIVIC)
10. Danish Refugee Council
11. Save the Children
12. Plan International
13. Norwegian Refugee Council
14. Diakonia
15. Amnesty International
16. American Friends Service Committee (AFSC)

